

Spring 2008 Syllabus, Contemporary Moral Problems, PHL 263W02, 3 Credit Hours

Meets in AB4 205 MWF 1:00-1:50PM

Professor: Alan C. Clune, Ph.D.

Office: AB4 Rm. 410

Office Hours: MWTh 2PM-3PM, Or By Appointment

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1. DESCRIPTION:

This course in applied ethics provides a foundation both in theory and critical reasoning for effectively engaging in debate about some of the most significant moral issues that confront us today. It aims to elevate moral conversation so that it rises above uncritical opinion and individual relativism. To this end, the course first provides an intellectual framework consisting in moral principles and moral theory. Second, the course applies these principles and theories to contemporary moral problems such as abortion, euthanasia, capital punishment, sexuality and marriage, animal rights, Legalization of drugs, War and Terrorism.

Credit Hours: 3

2. DESCRIPTION OF APPROACH:

The course will have a good amount of lecturing with notes. Also, there will be an emphasis on class discussion and active learning whereby students are expected to generate questions and offer critical evaluations of the various positions that are explored. Such in-class activity is of prime importance to developing critical thinking skills about moral issues. This is because such skills require practice thinking and speaking about the issues.

3. OBJECTIVES

Fundamental Objectives

- Learning to analyze and critically evaluate ideas, arguments, and points of view.
- Learning fundamental principles, generalizations, or theories.

Specific Objectives

- Learn basic theories of ethics.
- Learn to apply these theories to moral problems that arise in society.
- Learn the difference between having an opinion and having an opinion that one can make a case in support of.

4. REQUIREMENTS:

Two Tests (20% and 20%): Essay Exams

Final Exam (20%): Not Cumulative, Multiple Choice, bring scantron.

Surprise Quizzes: (10% of grade): Quizzes will be true and false questions from the readings. One quiz is dropped (keep up with the reading and this is an easy 10 points)

Position Papers (20% of Grade): Two times during the semester, students will be asked to write a one page, single spaced, 12point font, 1" margins, reflection paper in which they adopt a position on an issue being discussed and make a case for your position (Must be word processed). This one page should be a full, dense, page of writing. It's ok if it is slightly over one page. These papers are expected to engage the readings and course lectures. Papers that do not specifically address in a substantial way the course materials will receive a very low grade.

The student might answer the following types of questions: 1) what issue impressed you so far? 2) What position do you take on that issue? 3) What case can you make in support of this position? 4) What would it take for you to change you position? These papers are graded both on the student's demonstration that he/she understands the material being covered and on the student's ability to make a case for the opinions and positions that he/she takes on issues. The papers are not graded on the student's opinion but on the student's ability to make a reasonable case for whatever opinion he/she happens to have.

Homework Questions (10% of Grade): I will assign homework questions for each reading. You will need to write a full dense half page for each question asked (must be word processed). As long as you make a serious effort to answer each question, you will receive all the points. Otherwise you will get a zero.

5. SPECIFIC COURSE POLICIES

ABSENCES: In accordance with University regulations, I take roll every period. You are allowed 3 unexcused absences w/o penalty. You must attend class 75% the time or you will receive a failing grade. If you decide to stop attending class, please remember to drop the course or you will receive an F.

LATENESS or EARLY DEPARTURES: For those who are habitually late, I reserve the right to start taking ¼ point off his or her final grade for each time late. If you come to class late, you need to tell me on that day, right after class, or you will be counted as absent.

MAKE-UPS: If one is necessary, it is likely to be longer and more difficult than the regular test. You must have a good reason for missing a test; having another test the same day, for example, does not count as a good reason. If you do miss a test, see me as soon as possible. Your excuse must be written out and appropriately documented. **ANY EXCUSE THAT CANNOT BE VERIFIED WILL RESULT IN A GRADE OF ZERO FOR THAT EXAM.** If you do have a valid excuse, then we should make the arrangements for you to take a make-up **AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.**

INSTRUCTOR EVALUATIONS: Students will be asked to complete a course/instructor evaluation form toward the end of the semester. Starting in the Spring 2005 semester we will be officially using a new system of evaluation call 'IDEA'.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY: Anyone caught plagiarizing or cheating on exams will receive an F *for the course*. I will use Turnitin.com to check for plagiarism.

CLASSROOM CONDUCT: Everyone in the classroom is expected to be respectful of others. Heated discussions are often excited and good, but the expression of disagreements should not stray too far from a constructive purpose. The professor reserves the right to ask a student to leave that class period. **NO USE OF THE INTERNET DURING CLASS.**

UNCOLLECTED ASSIGNMENTS: I hold onto uncollected graded assignments until the first day of the next semester. If you have not collected them by then, they will be thrown away.

6. ADMINISTRATION POLICIES

STUDENT SYLLABUS GUIDELINES: Go to the following website for fuller information on the three policies that immediately follow below:

<http://www.shsu.edu/syllabus/>

RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS: Students are allowed to miss class and other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. Students remain responsible for all work. *See Student Syllabus Guidelines.*

NOTICE TO PERSONS WITH A DISABILITY: It is the policy of Sam Houston State University that individuals otherwise qualified shall not be excluded, solely by reason of their disability, from participation in any academic program of the university. Further, they shall not be denied the benefits of these programs nor shall they be subjected to discrimination. Students with disabilities that might affect their academic performance should visit with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities located in the Counseling Center. *See Student Syllabus Guidelines.*

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY: Students are expected to maintain honesty and integrity in the academic experiences both in and out of the classroom. *See Student Syllabus Guidelines.*

CLASSROOM CONDUCT: Students are expected to assist in maintaining a classroom environment that is conducive to learning. Students are to treat faculty and students with respect. Students are to turn off all cell phones while in the classroom. Under no circumstances are cell phones or any electronic devices to be used or seen during times of examination. Students may tape record lectures provided they do not disturb other students in the process.

VISITORS IN THE CLASSROOM: *Unannounced visitors to class must present a current, official SHSU identification card to be permitted into the classroom. They must not present a disruption to the class by their attendance. If the visitor is not a registered student, it is at the instructor's discretion whether or not the visitor will be allowed to remain in the classroom.*

This policy is not intended to discourage the occasional visiting of classes by responsible persons. Obviously, however, the visiting of a particular class should be occasional and not regular, and it should in no way constitute interference with registered members of the class or the educational process.

REGISTERING FOR CLASS: I cannot add anyone to the course, for any reason whatsoever, after the deadline for adding. This policy holds even if you were dropped due to financial aid reasons.

Q-DROPS: A Q-Drop is one made after the 12th day of classes but before the last day for dropping without receiving an F. There is now a limit of 5 Q-Drops for each student's undergraduate career at SHSU. This policy began Fall 2004. Q-Drops from other institutions and Q-Drops that occurred before Fall 2004 are not counted toward the limit of 5. Students who have reached their limit can petition the Dean to for another Q-Drop. If refused, they must stay registered for the course.

7. GRADING SCALE

90-100	A
80-89	B
70-79	C
60-69	D
<60	F

8. TEXT: Judith A. Boss' *Analyzing Moral Issues*, 3rd Edition (New York: McGraw Hill Publishing, 2005)

9. TENTATIVE COURSE OUTLINE:

Note: Please read the introductions to each issue in the text. They help give perspective. I give only the start page below, but the whole article should be read.

A. Ethical Theories

1. Introduction, 1
2. John Stuart Mill: Utilitarianism, 47
3. Immanuel Kant: The Categorical Imperative, p. 50
4. John Rawls: A Theory of Justice, 60
5. P. Don Premasirs: The Eightfold Path 72

B. Abortion

1. Introduction, 77
2. John T. Noonan, Jr.: An Almost Absolute Value..., 102
3. Judith Jarvis Thomson: A Defense of Abortion, 91
4. Mary Anne Warren: The Moral Significance of Birth..., 106
5. Stephen Hales: Abortion and Fathers' Rights, 117.

Test 1 (Approximately Sept 25th)

C. Non-Human Animals and Ethics

1. Introduction, 707
1. Peter Singer: Animal Liberation, 731
2. Narveson: Animal Rights Revisited, 725
3. Tom Regan: The Moral Basis of Vegetarianism, 720

D. Capital Punishment

1. Introduction, 234
2. Morris: Punishment and Loss..., 253
3. Jeffrey Reiman: Why the Death Penalty Should be Abolished..., 272

E. Sexuality and Marriage

1. Introduction, 349
2. Finnis: Law, Morality, and Sexual Orientation, 385
3. Nava: The Case For Gay Marriage.

Test 2 (Approximately October 30th)

F. War and Terrorism

1. Introduction, 629
2. Coady: War and Terrorism, 649
3. Hashmi: Interpreting The Islamic Ethics of War and Peace
4. Lubin: The War on Terrorism and the End of Human Rights, 681

G. Genetic Engineering and Cloning

1. Introduction, 132
2. Ridley: The New Eugenics, 146
3. Anderson: Genetics and Human Malleability, 150
4. Robertson: The Question of Human Cloning, 153
5. Kass: The Wisdom of Repugnance, 160

H. Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide

1. Introduction, 132
2. James Rachels: Active and Passive Euthanasia, 163
3. Battin: The Case for Euthanasia, 199
4. Callahan: Aid in Dying..., 208

Final